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## V.—THE INFLUENCE OF CONSERVATISM ON THE ART OF PEREDA

For purposes of discussion it is convenient to divide the literary productions of Pereda<sup>1</sup> into two classes; from 1859 until about 1876 he was occupied chiefly with short sketches known as *cuadros de costumbres*; from 1877 until the virtual close of his career as an author in 1895 his attention was centered upon novels.<sup>2</sup> Long sketches that approach the dignity of novels appeared before 1877, and Pereda never ceased entirely the composition of short pieces. The distinction just made, however, is roughly true.

Pereda first became known to the reading public as a *costumbrista*, or describer of manners and customs. His background was the district known familiarly to its inhabitants as the *Montaña*, comprising the seacoast, the city of Santander, neighboring villages and rural districts, and the Cantabrian mountains.

The best of the *cuadros de costumbres*<sup>3</sup> are undoubt-

<sup>1</sup>The leading facts in the life of José María de Pereda may be summarized as follows: Born in Polanco in 1833, he received his early education in the neighboring city of Santander; he spent two years in Madrid (1852-1854) in order to study for the artillery branch of the army; giving up his idea of a military career, he returned to Santander to devote himself to literature; he was elected deputy to the *Cortes* in 1871, but, disappointed in politics, he returned to his home in 1872 and built a house in Polanco, where the remainder of his life was spent; an easy competence enabled him to write how and when he pleased; in 1897 he was elected a member of the Spanish Academy; his death occurred in 1906.

<sup>2</sup>The word *novel* is used in a general sense; many of Pereda's masterpieces do not conform to a strict definition of the term.

<sup>3</sup>The *cuadros de costumbres* are published in four collections:

edly the earlier ones, written between 1859 and 1864. Here are found examples of a genuinely objective treatment of the various inhabitants of Santander and its vicinity. Some of these sketches have made a profound impression upon competent critics. *La Leva*, *La Robla*, *A las Indias*, *Suum cuique*, and others, have been received as veritable masterpieces. In them Pereda shows the rare ability to suggest by a few telling strokes the whole life of an individual and, in the individual, the life of a community. El Tuerto and Trementorio in *La Leva* conjure up before the reader's eyes the struggles of the fishing folk of Santander. After reading *A las Indias* we can understand the temptation among the young to emigrate to America, the sacrifices of their parents to enable them to do this, and the tragic uselessness of the whole procedure; the experiences of one family suffice for all. In other sketches we find now a curious character of the Santander of Pereda's youth, now a peculiar custom, now a playful gibe at those who consider country life either a bore or an idyll. The most objective pieces are the best. We might divine from them what Pereda tells us elsewhere—that he is striving to set down for contemporary and future readers the surroundings of his boyhood, the picturesque characteristics fast yielding to the march of civilization. No one could have composed these scenes without feeling love for them. They required not only the eye of a skilled and patient observer, but a heart that beat in sympathy with the events and personages described.

The severely realistic manner of the early *cuadros de costumbres* produced in certain quarters the idea that

*Escenas montaÑesas*, *Tipos y paisajes*, *Esbozos y rasguños*, and *Tipos trashumantes*; the last mentioned volume contains also the *Bocetos al temple*, which are rather long sketches or stories.

Pereda was too harsh in his descriptions.<sup>4</sup> In short, he was accused of doing injury to the *Montaña*. No accusation could have been more cruel, for no man ever loved his native province more devotedly than did Pereda. His answers to such criticisms are illuminating. On one occasion he writes: "Being a portrait painter, although an unworthy one, and a slave to the truth, when I painted the customs of the *Montaña* I copied them exactly; and as they are not perfect, their imperfections appeared in the copy."<sup>5</sup> Again: "I painted it [the *Montaña*] yielding to a temptation stronger than my will; the same one that obliges the poet to sing to nature, and the musician to snatch her scattered harmonies. An irresistible, invincible impulse, perhaps greater than that which drove some of you to the other side of the Atlantic in search of fancied torrents of minted gold pieces."<sup>6</sup>

The *cuadros de costumbres* written after 1864 do not seem quite so spontaneous as their predecessors. The author injects into them more of his own personality. Again and again he launches into a biting satire upon the strangers who visit Santander;<sup>7</sup> he attacks the innovations for which modernism is responsible. The reader is more deeply impressed by the purely objective method of the earlier sketches, which fortunately does not entirely disappear in the later ones. We learn a great deal about

<sup>4</sup> For instance, in the preface to the first edition of the *Escenas monta​es* Antonio de Trueba had praised Pereda highly, but had suggested that he was perhaps unduly pessimistic in delineation of character and in choice of scene. These remarks are omitted from later editions of the *Escenas monta​es*, because several changes were made in the grouping of the sketches which removed the applicability of some of Trueba's observations.

<sup>5</sup> From the preface to *Tipos y paisajes*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Especially, of course, in *Tipos trashumantes*.

Pereda's beliefs and prejudices from his political writings, but we gain a higher appreciation of his art and a more convincing demonstration of his love for the *Montaña* from such pieces as *El Fin de una raza*, in which the death of Trementorio (of *La Leva*) is described.<sup>8</sup>

Several circumstantial narratives, or short novels, such as *Blasones y talegas*, *Los Hombres de pro*, *La Mujer del César*, and *Oros son triunfos*, are preparatory to Pereda's longer works. They contain numerous strictures on modern, and particularly on urban, society, on new methods, on corrupt politics, etc. The criticism is sometimes softened by good-humored comment and by the recognition of imperfections in the objects of Pereda's admiration.<sup>9</sup>

Three books represent Pereda's first attempts at long novels: *El Buey suelto*, *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera*, and *De tal palo, tal astilla*.

*El Buey suelto* (1877) is an answer to Balzac's *Petites misères de la vie conjugale* and *Physiologie du mariage*. In the introduction it is called by the author a poor effort at *fisiología celibataria*. He there states: "I was not guided by the purpose of solving any problem, but of giving free play to fancy on a fixed theme." The book is, as he calls it, a series of pictures that present in a ridiculous light the adventures of a bachelor, narrow, selfish, and commonplace, and yet not depraved. Although most of the scenes are comic, Pereda allows himself to be serious long enough to leave no possible doubt as to his conviction of the advantages of the married state. There is about as much real argument as in the *Petites misères* of Balzac. So far, then, the work may be called a satisfactory rejoinder to the French book.

<sup>8</sup> Written in 1880.

<sup>9</sup> This is particularly true of the masterly character sketch *Blasones y talegas*.

*Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera* (1878) serves a double purpose; it indicates, on the one hand, the attractiveness of patriarchal customs and, on the other, the evil effects produced upon an ignorant rustic community by political disturbance, by agitation for universal education, and the like.

*De tal palo, tal astilla* (1879) is an answer to the *Doña Perfecta* and the *Gloria* of Pérez Galdós. It is a defense of the Catholic religion and an exposition of the evils of freethinking and atheism. Fortunately for the art of the book the two freethinkers, father and son, are personally admirable. The point is made that they have no spiritual consolation in misfortune. Earthly disappointment means to them despair or suicide.

In the decade from 1880 to 1890 Pereda produced probably his best and his poorest work. The most characteristic novels of the period are the three that deal exclusively with the *Montaña*.<sup>10</sup> *El Sabor de la tierruca* (1881) is an idyllic description of village life, objective for the most part and full of healthy realism. Except for the slight but consistent plot that runs through the book, it is a series of *cuadros de costumbres*. *Sotileza* (1884), commonly considered the author's best work, is a prose epic of the seafaring people of Santander as they were in Pereda's youth. The closing words of the novel describe the author's attitude toward it. He calls it "the gigantic endeavor to sing, in the midst of these disbelieving and colorless generations, the noble virtues, the miserable existence, the great weaknesses, the incorruptible faith, and the epic labors of the courageous and picturesque mariner of Santander." *La Puchera* (1888) contains more plot than most of Pereda's works, but it is still a picture of manners and

<sup>10</sup> *El Sabor de la tierruca, Sotileza, and La Puchera.*

customs—in this instance, among the inhabitants of a small village near the coast.

*Pedro Sánchez* (1883) is Pereda's most successful venture into the world outside his province. It was written in response to critics who had charged him with provincialism.<sup>11</sup> The flattering reception accorded to the work surprised both the author and Menéndez y Pelayo.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that the reading public and critics preferred familiar scenes to the remote settings of the *Montaña*. Notwithstanding the political and social corruption portrayed in *Pedro Sánchez*, Pereda shows in this book more fairness than elsewhere toward Madrid. He assumes also an unusually impartial attitude toward revolutionary disturbance.

The three novels that have added least to Pereda's reputation are *La Montálvez* (1887), *Nubes de estío* (1890), and *Al primer vuelo* (1890). *La Montálvez* is a protest against the immorality of aristocratic society in Madrid. *Nubes de estío* is simply a framework to contain its author's invectives against modernism and unequal marriages. Chapters are inserted apparently only to point out abuses and vices. *Al primer vuelo* possesses little in common with other works of Pereda except satire of gossips. It has a slight love theme spun out to perhaps unreasonable length.

After 1890 Pereda wrote very little besides *Peñas arriba* (1894), the culminating work of his life. This is a description of a small village situated near the top of the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Emilia Pardo Bazán, *La Cuestión palpitante*, p. 268.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Menéndez y Pelayo, *José María de Pereda* in *Estudios de crítica literaria*, vol. v, pp. 414-417; this study is also prefixed to the first volume of Pereda's *Obras completas*. As a fellow townsman and friend of Pereda, Menéndez y Pelayo was peculiarly interested in the success of his works. He was well acquainted with *Pedro Sánchez* and other books before their publication.

Cantabrian mountains. Scene after scene of calm beauty, of storm, of heroism, of patriarchal customs, all traced with prodigious skill, bring before us at one sweep the whole ideal system of Pereda. It must be granted, however, that he is not always satisfied to let the reader draw his own conclusions. Direct arguments against modernism are found here and there throughout the book.

A few short sketches, with *Pachín González*, a powerful and realistic description of the havoc wrought by an explosion on a vessel in Santander harbor, are the only other products of the last fifteen years of Pereda's life.

Critics of an earlier generation attempted to connect Pereda with certain schools of fiction popular shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century. He was considered an adherent of realism or naturalism—a follower of Flaubert, Zola, and others. Little attention was paid to the fact that much of his work antedated certain novels from which he was supposed to have derived inspiration. He himself and Menéndez y Pelayo, the critic who knew him best, have pointed out absurdities in efforts to classify his literary productions. In the preface to *De tal palo, tal astilla* he protests against attempts to affiliate him with certain schools, and he speaks of his *peculiarísima compleción literaria*.

Menéndez y Pelayo has ably discussed the real literary background of his lifelong friend.<sup>13</sup> After disposing summarily of the fancied debt to French realists and naturalists he takes up the question of Pereda's *peculiarísima compleción literaria*. He likes to think of Pereda primarily as a painter of customs and therefore as the successor of Cervantes, of the picaresque novelists, and of

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 382 ff.



all who wrote *cuadros de costumbres*. He declares that Pereda derived much inspiration, both in thought and in style, from the writers of the Golden Age.

Among the more immediate predecessors of Pereda in the portrayal of manners were Larra, Flores, Mesonero Romanos, Fernán Caballero, and Antonio de Trueba. Not only does Menéndez y Pelayo mention these names, but Pereda himself takes occasion to acknowledge his gratitude to Mesonero Romanos<sup>14</sup> and to Trueba.<sup>15</sup> Particularly interesting are the discussions of Spanish letters contained in *Pedro Sánchez*, the scene of which is the Madrid of 1854. Pereda speaks here of the wretched scrawls that passed under the name of "novels of Spanish customs." Then he proceeds to praise highly the endeavors of Fernán Caballero and others to introduce a sane realistic method in place of the wild romanticism and the imitation of foreign authors that had formed the stock in trade of popular novelists.

Pereda always objected to being called a realist, because he feared that the term identified him with a school and, what is more, with a foreign school. On the other hand, he was proud to be considered a chronicler of his fellow-countrymen. He must have enjoyed the tributes paid to him by such authorities as Pérez Galdós, Menéndez y Pelayo, and Emilia Pardo Bazán when they called him virtually the interpreter to the outside world of his native province.

Pereda's literary creed is contained in his speech on the occasion of his admission to the Spanish Academy on February 21st, 1897.<sup>16</sup> At that time he had reached the age

<sup>14</sup> See preface to *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera*.

<sup>15</sup> Preface to *Escenas montañosas*.

<sup>16</sup> Menéndez y Pelayo—Pereda—Pérez Galdós, *Discursos leídos ante*

of sixty-three years, and his active career was virtually at an end. His speech is a defense of what he calls the *novela regional*, or the novel that deals with the district familiar to an author through constant association with it from childhood. He defines the *novela regional*, in general, as one "whose substance is developed in a district or place that has special and distinctive life, characters, and colors, that enter the work as a principal part of it." Then he maintains that such a novel could not deal with any city that conforms with modern ideas or with modern cultivation; that it is especially appropriate in Spain; that it does not interfere with love of country by a substitution of love of a province; that it is healthy, lofty, and patriotic; that the love of a *región* can be understood only by one who has lived in it; that the inhabitants of a city can satisfy themselves with other cities, while a resident of a small district will never be contented in any other place; that the so-called *alta novela* with its politics, philosophy, problems, and conflicts is really indicative only of what is ephemeral, while the *novela regional* takes account of the eternal truths of nature and humanity; that particularly in Spain the conventional novel is an intruder; that genuine Spanish realism, dealing with the people, can trace its history back to *Don Quijote*, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and other glorious products of the Golden Age; that it is therefore the purest Spanish product.

It has often been demonstrated that a novel or series of novels dealing with the life of a small or distant region may contain exceedingly broad conceptions. The characters may be provincial in external traits, yet general or eternal in fundamental meaning. The existence of this

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double treatment and significance in the writings of Pereda is pointed out in the speech delivered before the Spanish Academy by Pérez Galdós in answer to Pereda.<sup>17</sup>

Conservatism was the keynote of Pereda's political and social creed. Natural inclination turned him to literature as a form of expression. It was inevitable, therefore, that his writings should be influenced and even dominated by his most deep-rooted beliefs. When an author has strong convictions he may express them in two ways: by censure of what is distasteful to him, and by praise of what is dear. Thus it is with Pereda. He glorifies his beloved *Montaña*, and he protests against innovations. There is little tendency toward compromise in the man's nature. So sacred and so vital are his ideals that he cannot contemplate with patience anything at variance with them. He is unwilling to abate a jot of his lifelong convictions.

Thus, the artistic productions of Pereda are an index to his unswerving beliefs. He uses every weapon at his disposal to attack ideas and persons repellent to him. Good-natured fun gives way to irony and bitterness, and these in turn make place for straightforward abuse and argument. Irony is prominent in the *Tipos trashumantes*, *Los Hombres de pro*, *El Buey suelto*, and *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera*. In these works Pereda caricatures his chosen enemies; he exposes them mercilessly to the most brilliant light, where all the ridiculous details of their unfortunate characters are readily perceived. Savage satire condemns the summer visitor in Santander, the pushing political adventurer, the selfish bachelor, the hypocritical man of importance, the ignorant *parvenu*, the purveyor of revolutionary ideas. Yet irony and satire are legitimate arms for a novelist. Pereda employs them with

<sup>17</sup> Speech of Pérez Galdós, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 ff.

deadly skill. Although occasionally good-humored in his strictures, he often goes to extreme lengths to pillory the objects of his detestation. So far does he proceed that the reader recognizes at last lack of balance and bigotry.

There is a great difference between artistic (even if excessive) use of irony and employment of direct argument. The controversial tendency was probably always present in Pereda's mind. It is to be observed in some of his earliest *cuadros de costumbres*.<sup>18</sup> But a short sketch may justifiably be polemical and nothing else. It is a more serious matter when irrelevant abuse is inserted into novels that more clearly aim to be works of art. Some might detect too much personal animus and unnecessary vituperation in *De tal palo, tal astilla* and in *Pedro Sánchez*. In the former work, however, the theme is frankly contentious, and nothing seems out of place or dictated by mere prejudice, if the main purpose of the author is understood; neither is the half-ironical, half-abusive style of *Pedro Sánchez* displeasing unless one is annoyed by a strong and consistent presentation of the conservative point of view, which amounts to a lost cause as far as many modern readers are concerned. Other books might well be accused of exhibiting traces of narrowness. In fact, minute search would bring to light something of a polemical nature in all of Pereda's works, except a few of the *cuadros de costumbres*.

In *La Montálvez*, however, there is no softening of the polemical attitude. It is possible to admire this book and yet to find in it page after page marked by the greatest unfairness. If we were to judge by it alone, we should be forced to regard the high society of Madrid as entirely

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the first of the *Escenas montańesas: Santander antańo y hogańo* (1859).

corrupt and vicious. It is virtually a savage attack upon a world with which Pereda was not too well acquainted and against which he was moved by the most bitter prejudices. If the result is even passably good, the credit is due to the genius of Pereda and not to his judgment or sense of fairness. The book is dictated by an irreconcilable hatred of the social system of the capital as conceived by Pereda, who was prepossessed by uncompromising esteem for quiet country life and modest virtues.

Judged by the severely artistic standard, the blemishes of *Nubes de estío* are fatal. In one chapter, unconnected with the plot, three capital charges are brought against the literary people of Madrid: that they pay no attention to provincial writers, that they received *La Montálvez* unfairly, and that they deny that a province can supply themes worthy of treatment in a novel.<sup>19</sup> Other intemperate attacks upon objects of the author's disdain are scattered through the book.

Even *Peñas arriba* is not exempt from the intrusion of the writer's opinions in a manner not justified by the plot. It is true that the lofty tone, the intense seriousness, and the exalted fervor of this masterpiece make us forget minor blemishes in admiration for the whole. It remains undeniable that conservative propaganda finds its place in several conversations wherein the artificial life of the cities is placed at a disadvantage. Perhaps Pereda could scarcely have refrained from speaking out; he was over sixty years old when he finished *Peñas arriba*, and his feelings had doubtless been growing constantly stronger as his age increased.

Nervous susceptibility accompanied the controversial

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Emilia Pardo Bazán, *Los Resquemores de Pereda* in her *Obras completas*, vol. VI, *Polémicas y estudios literarios*.

spirit in Pereda's nature. The testimony of Pérez Galdós makes it clear that Pereda's nerves were always excited when he was waiting to see how a book would be received by public and critics. It appears that he dreaded hostile comments, and that he could not rest easy until he learned that the products of his toil had made a favorable impression.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of Pereda's irritable sensitiveness is manifest in the polemic between him and the Countess Emilia Pardo Bazán.<sup>21</sup> Señora Pardo Bazán wrote a criticism of *Nubes de estío*, or rather of the chapter therein that contains Pereda's attacks upon the literary circles of Madrid. This article deeply wounded Pereda. The critic had used an unfortunate title for her comment,<sup>22</sup> and had not hesitated to tax Pereda with his prejudices; but she had admitted his genius and acknowledged her admiration for him. Pereda replied in an effusion called *Las Comezones de la Señora Pardo Bazán*. This reply is little more than an outburst of wounded pride and spite by no means creditable to its composer and an indication of his unwillingness to be censured and of the immovable nature of his ideas.

Further development of this theme would be of doubtful advantage and manifestly unjust to Pereda. We have considered only one application of his conservative beliefs, and that the destructive one. Examination of the constructive side of his work produces results more pleasing and more valuable.

There is a temptation felt in common by many cultivated men to set forth the excellent qualities of past ages.

<sup>20</sup> Speech of Pérez Galdós, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-187. Galdós describes Pereda by a sentence imitated from Quevedo: *Érase un hombre pegado a un sistema nervioso*.

<sup>21</sup> E. Pardo Bazán, *Obras completas*, vol. VI, pp. 25-65.

<sup>22</sup> *Los Resquemores de Pereda*, already mentioned.

As the average man cannot be cognizant of the evolutionary steps that have led to his time, it devolves upon a chosen few to reveal to contemporary generations the tradition of the past. The geologist, the historian, and the scholar transplant themselves into distant eras and strive to reproduce those eras. What is this but the instinct of conservatism mellowed, at last, and ennobled by meditation until it becomes a sacred duty to preserve the past and to supply standards that may guide present and future generations? Behind the impulse to investigate Greek and Roman activity, for example, is recognition of the greatness of Greek and Roman achievement.

Worship of former ages and interest in them have long since invaded the field of art. The epic poem, the historical novel, and the historical drama are among the important results. A work of literature that does not contain some reference or some more or less intimate indebtedness to the past is almost inconceivable.

Artistic works that deal with distant ages labor under a serious disadvantage. Faithfulness to human nature and minute observation of conditions that influence human nature are essential to any writer who aspires to excellence in this field. Many an author of unquestioned ability has tried his hand at the historical novel. However careful the work may be, however marvelous the conceptions and profound the research, there is always something lacking. Numerous petty but essential details of the period described are unknown, and must be forever unknown. The point of view of the normal citizen of a remote epoch cannot be restored in all its fulness. Investigation may work wonders, the sympathetic imagination and the creative power may accomplish miracles, but the record still falls short of the vital truth. The historical novel must

lay stress upon detached facts that have come down through the ages, and must overlook equally important facts that simply cannot be known.

Granting an equality in ability and care, the novelist who deals with a well-known epoch has an advantage over one who describes an environment but vaguely reconstructed. He who chooses the immediate past has a comprehension of the details of his subject matter that cannot be attained by the describer of the remote, who must rely upon an unusual theme to awaken interest, so that realism inevitably suffers. Only the artist who writes of the present or of a past that he has witnessed can be truly realistic.

In Pereda is combined the desire to describe the past with the minute information necessary to the realist. He looks back to the province of Santander as it was in his youth. In his opinion it had been totally changed by modern progress. Feeling bound to his early environment by the most sacred ties, he assumed the task of preserving his remembrances in the form of works of art. His best works are indubitably those in which he strives with the most single purpose to paint the life of the *Montaña* that he had known. What he most coveted was the approval of his contemporaries of Santander who had witnessed the scenes depicted by him. They could appreciate as no others could the fidelity to truth in his compositions. The closer the portrait was to the original, the more likely it was to please such critics. For this reason Menéndez y Pelayo was more genuinely delighted by *La Leva* than by any other of his friend's works. Those who have not been inhabitants of the *Montaña* can perhaps better appreciate the longer books.

Pereda's chief claim to fame as a novelist should rest



upon *El Sabor de la tierruca*, *Sotileza*, *La Puchera*, and *Peñas arriba*. These are detailed studies of the world to which their author was passionately attached. They are, in the main, unmarred by prejudiced abuse of another world.<sup>23</sup> Many of their excellent and peculiar qualities are encountered in other books—notably in *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera* and in *De tal palo, tal astilla*. We shall speak, therefore, principally of the four productions first named, because they are most typical, but we do not mean that the characteristics therein displayed are necessarily excluded from the other works.

Pereda introduces his readers to the *Montaña* simply by reproducing it. Plots are secondary to description of life. We term his productions novels, because that is the most convenient classification of them. They might almost equally well be called epics in prose. The reader is taught to know the environment *in toto*. He sees immense pictures of life, swarming in detail, where every nook and cranny is probed to bring forth the truth within it. The immutable affection of the author for the persons, the customs, the virtues, and even the hardships that he describes cannot but command the respect of the reader, whether or not he agrees. For the panorama displayed there is a deep religious background, a faith as changeless and as rugged as the sea and the mountains themselves. This faith is a natural and inseparable part of the picture, and as such nobody could even think of questioning it. Almost as essential is the prevalence of patriarchal customs, according to which a noble gentleman feels personal solicitude for the welfare of all the humble people who surround him, while they, in turn, look up to him, visit him in the evenings, and

<sup>23</sup> Tendencies toward unnecessary argument in *Peñas arriba* have been mentioned.

question and consult him on every difficulty. Next, marriage has its natural and inevitable place. The husband assumes his post as head of the family, the wife loves, helps, and obeys him, and the children revere him—all without the slightest hesitation or question.

The simple life is everywhere extolled through the effective process of mere description. Pereda's heroes and heroines take things as they come, without complaint. If sacrifice is required, it is performed ungrudgingly. If a crisis necessitates heroism, the need is always met effectively and unobtrusively. Life is hard for the humble, but they accept it, and they are easily pleased. Since the complex diversions and needs of a city are unknown, they are not missed. Many of Pereda's characters illustrate the contentment with their surroundings that he admired. His peasants and his fishermen appear to be literally transplanted from life into books. Their language is reproduced and their faithfulness and mental limitations are delineated with the most amazing exactness. They are impressive because they are so unbelievably human. Whoever has read Pereda comprehends the strength and the weakness of the humble toilers of the province of Santander. The priests who are pictured in these novels are sublime figures. Sincerity and simplicity carry them unquestioningly through all their duties. They are unreservedly at the service of their flocks in all matters spiritual or material, and they proceed to the most difficult tasks as a matter of course, with that patient resignation and serenity which inspire so many of Pereda's characters.

Gentlemen of exalted sentiments and unflinching determination to fill their place in the community are found in all of Pereda's novels. Except in *Peñas arriba*, however, they do not awaken so much interest and do not ring quite

so true as their lowly neighbors. Either they are slightly idealized or their appeal is of inferior strength through a comparative lack of picturesqueness.

As critics have remarked,<sup>24</sup> Pereda's women are somewhat shadowy figures. Admirable they are in many cases, but they never play parts of the highest importance. At their best they are lovable, patient, and affectionate, following their allotted path in life with the same calm devotion that marks Pereda's male types.

All this and much more is the bountiful offering from the spring of Pereda's love for the *Montaña* of his youth. His devotion bears fruit in the form of a vast description of his province. The picture is probably as realistic as any work of art could be; but just because it is a work of art it is permeated by idealism. Such enthusiasm as Pereda felt could not confine itself to photographic reproduction, but must intone a solemn hymn of praise to his beloved Santander. Nor is it to be supposed that the picture is altogether one-sided. We see the evil side of existence as well as the good. Hard living, vice, pettiness, jealousy, fondness for dispute, and downright villainy are represented. The picture is thereby more perfect.

Pereda is a product of Santander, of Old Castile, and of Spain. We can easily imagine him as one of his own heroes, devoted to the soil, interested in the welfare of dependents, and intensely conscious and proud of his position. If his conservative tendencies made him unfair to modernism, they yet imparted to his artistic impulse the material for his life work, and brought within possibility of realization through his own writings the wish expressed

<sup>24</sup> Cf. R. E. Bassett, Introduction to edition of *Pedro Sánchez*, pp. xxxv-xl.

with regard to the *novela regional* in general in the final portion of the speech before the Spanish Academy—that a record of the picturesque customs of bygone days might serve as a relaxation and consolation to the unfortunate victim of the leveling processes of civilization.

JOHN VAN HORNE.